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House Minority leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., speaks at DMI Companies in Monongahela, Pa., Friday, Sept. 23, 2022.

Associated Press

GOP stumbles with independents contributed to midterm woes

By THOMAS BEAUMONT and
HANNAH FINGERHUT

Associated Press

EAGAN, Minn. (AP) — As Republican Tyler Kistner's closing ad aired last month in one of the most competitive congressional districts in the U.S., Vickie Klang felt that something was missing.

The 58-year-old veterinary technician and self-described independent voter

watched as the 30-second spot showed grainy black-and-white images of President Joe Biden with two-term Democratic Rep. Angie Craig superimposed alongside him. The narrator ominously described life in America as "dangerous and unaffordable" because of an alliance between the two Democrats.

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Removal of palapas at the beach causing commotion



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Three organizers join forces for a three-day Dande Festival



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GOP stumbles with independents contributed to midterm woes

Continued from Front

Absent from the ad, Klang thought, was anything close to a solution beyond electing Kistner.

"You're never telling me what you're going to do for the state or the country," Klang recalled. "That's a huge turnoff."

Klang ultimately backed Craig, contributing to a 5 percentage point win for a Democratic incum-

bent whom Republicans spent more than \$12 million to unseat. From Maine to California, Republicans faced similar unexpected setbacks with the small but crucial slice of voters who don't identify with either major party, according to AP VoteCast, a sweeping national survey of the electorate.

Republican House candidates nationwide won the support of 38% of indepen-

dent voters in last month's midterm elections, VoteCast showed. That's far short of the 51% that Democrats scored with the same group in 2018 when they swept into power by picking up 41 seats. The GOP's lackluster showing among independents helps explain why Republicans flipped just nine seats, securing a threadbare majority that has already raised questions about the party's



Rep. Angie Craig, D-Minn., greets supporters at an election night party Nov. 8, 2022, at Loon's Landing Brewery in Savage, Minn.

Associated Press



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ability to govern. Some Republican strategists say the finding is a sign that messages that resonate during party primaries, including searing critiques of Biden, were less effective in the general election campaign because independent voters were searching for more than just the opposition.

"You've got to tell them what you're going to do," said David Winston, a Republican pollster and senior adviser to House Republicans who had been critical of GOP candidates' messaging strategy this year. "Somehow the Republican campaigns managed not to do that. And that's a real serious problem."

In the northern reaches of Minnesota's 2nd congressional district, a swath of lakes and onetime farm country teeming with development near the Twin Cities, more than a dozen independent voters echo Winston's assessment.

Unlike Klang, who grew up in a union Democratic household, Steve Stauff of Shakopee, 20 miles (32 kilometers) west, was raised in a rural, conservative Republican home. The two share a recent history of voting for Republican and

Democratic statewide candidates, as well as for independent candidate for governor Jesse Ventura in 1998.

But Kistner's message, like those of other losing Republican challengers in targeted races, appeared aimed more at Republicans than swing voters: simply linking Craig with Biden, whose job disapproval ratings had outpaced approval, and Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, widely unpopular with Republicans. House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy came out with a campaign proposal in September titled "Commitment to America," billed as a GOP agenda. However, the proposal, a collection of repackaged goals such as increased domestic petroleum production, was light on details and mentioned little during the campaign.

"We were just being told, 'Pelosi bad, Biden bad, therefore Craig bad,' instead of hearing 'This is my plan to represent this district,'" said Stauff, a 42-year-old sales representative. "If you don't bring me solutions to whatever problems you think we have, how can I take you seriously?" □

Law protects export of sacred Native American items from US

By FELICIA FONSECA

Associated Press

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. (AP) — Federal penalties have increased under a newly signed law intended to protect the cultural patrimony of Native American tribes, immediately making some crimes a felony and doubling the prison time for anyone convicted of multiple offenses.

President Joe Biden signed the Safeguard Tribal Objects of Patrimony Act on Dec. 21, a bill that had been introduced since 2016. Along with stiffer penalties, it prohibits the export of sacred Native American items from the U.S. and creates a certification process to distinguish art from sacred items.

The effort largely was inspired by pueblo tribes in New Mexico and Arizona who repeatedly saw sacred objects up for auction in France. Tribal leaders issued passionate pleas for the return of the items but were met with resistance and the reality that the U.S. had no mechanism to prevent the items from leaving the country.

"The STOP Act is really born out of that problem and hearing it over and over," said attorney Katie Klass, who represents Acoma Pueblo on the matter and is a citizen of the Wyandotte Nation of Oklahoma. "It's really designed to link existing



A Native American feather bonnet from 1890 made of eagle feathers, rooster hackles, wood rods, porcupine hair, wool cloth, felt, and glass beads, is displayed as part of the exhibition, "Go West! Art of the American Frontier from the Buffalo Bill Center of the West," at the High Museum of Art on Oct. 31, 2013, in Atlanta.

domestic laws that protect tribal cultural heritage with an existing international mechanism."

The law creates an export certification system that would help clarify whether items were created as art and provides a path for the voluntary return of items that are part of a tribe's cultural heritage. Federal agencies would work with Native Americans, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians to outline what items should not leave the U.S. and to seek items back.

Information provided by tribes about those items

would be shielded from public records laws.

While dealers and collectors often see the items as art to be displayed and preserved, tribes view the objects as living beings held in community, said Brian Vallo, a consultant on repatriation.

"These items remain sacred, they will never lose their significance," said Vallo, a former governor of Acoma Pueblo in New Mexico. "They will never lose their power and place as a cultural item. And it is for this reason that we are so concerned."

Tribes have seen some wins over the years:

— In 2019, Finland agreed to return ancestral remains of Native American tribes that once called the cliffs of Mesa Verde National Park in southern Colorado home. The remains and artifacts were unearthed by a Swedish researcher in 1891 and held in the collection of the national Museum of Finland.

— That same year, a ceremonial shield that vanished from Acoma Pueblo in the 1970s was returned to the tribe after a nearly four-year campaign involv-

ing U.S. senators, diplomats and prosecutors. The circular, colorful shield featuring the face of a Kachina, or ancestral spirit, had been held at a Paris auction house.

— In 2014, the Navajo Nation sent its vice president to Paris to bid on items believed to be used in winter-time healing ceremonies after diplomacy and a plea to return the items failed. The tribe secured several items, spending \$9,000.

— In 2013, the Annenberg Foundation quietly bought nearly two dozen ceremonial items at an auction in Paris and later returned them to the Hopi, the San Carlos Apache and the White Mountain Apache tribes in Arizona. The tribes said the items invoke the spirit of their ancestors and were taken in the late 19th and 20th centuries.

The STOP Act ties in with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act that requires museums and universities that receive federal funds to disclose Native American items in their possession, inventory them, and notify and transfer those items to affiliated tribes and Native Hawaiians or descendants. The Interior Department has proposed a number of changes to strengthen NAGPRA and is taking public comment on them until mid-January. □

3 Washington state electric substations vandalized

TACOMA, Wash. (AP) — Vandalism at three power substations in western Washington early Sunday initially cut power to about 14,000 utility customers, the Pierce County Sheriff's Office said.

The attacks come as federal officials are warning that the U.S. power grid needs better security to prevent domestic terrorism and after a large outage in North Carolina earlier this month that took days to repair.

In January, a U.S. Department of Homeland Security report warned that domes-

tic extremists have been developing "credible, specific plans" to attack electricity infrastructure since at least 2020.

Tacoma Public Utilities reported vandalism at about 5:30 a.m. Sunday at one substation, followed by vandalism at a second substation, the sheriff's office said. The outages affected about 7,300 customers in an area southeast of Tacoma. Just before noon, the utility had restored power to all but 2,700 customers whose power was estimated to be restored at about

6:30 p.m. Sunday. Meanwhile, just before noon, Puget Sound Energy reported vandalism that had happened at about 2:30 a.m. Sunday caused a power outage at one of its substations. The nearly 7,700 customers who lost power had it restored by 5 a.m., Puget Sound spokesperson Andrew Padula said. The company is investigating, along with authorities, and declined to comment further, Padula said. In all three cases, the sheriff's office says someone forced their way into the



A Tacoma Power crew works at an electrical substation damaged by vandals early on Christmas morning, Sunday, Dec. 25, 2022, in Graham, Wa.

Associated Press

fenced area surrounding the substations and damaged equipment to cause a power outage. Officials have not said how

the substations were damaged. No suspects are in custody and officials don't know if it was a coordinated attack. □

Western N.Y. death toll rises to 27 from cold, storm chaos

By CAROLYN THOMPSON

Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — The death toll from a Buffalo-area blizzard rose to 27 in western New York, authorities said Monday, as the region reeled from one of the worst weather-related disasters in its history. Much of the rest of the United States was hit by ferocious winter conditions.

Those who lost their lives around Buffalo were found in cars, homes and snowbanks. Some died while shoveling snow, others when emergency crews could not respond in time to medical crises. The storm is blamed for at least 50 deaths nationwide, with rescue and recovery efforts ongoing Monday.

Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz described the blizzard as "the worst storm probably in our lifetime" and warned there may be more dead. Some people, he noted, were stranded in their cars for more than two days.

"It's just a horrible situation that we can see sort of the light at the end of the tunnel. But this is not the end yet," he said Monday. The National Weather Service said Monday that up to 9 more inches of snow (23 centimeters) could fall in some areas through Tuesday.

Scientists say the climate change crisis may have contributed to the intensity of the storm. That's because the atmosphere can carry more water vapor, which acts as fuel, said Mark Serreze, director of the National Snow and Ice Data Center at the University of Colorado, Boulder. Victor Gensini, a meteorology professor at Northern Illinois University, likened a single weather event to an "at-bat" — and the climate as your "batting average." "It's hard to say," Serreze said. "But are the dice a little bit loaded now? Absolutely."

The blizzard roared across western New York Friday and Saturday — stranding motorists, knocking out power and preventing emergency crews from



This photo provided by the Twitter page of New York Gov. Kathy Hochul, snow from this weekends blizzard covers downtown Buffalo on Monday, Dec. 26, 2022.

Associated Press

reaching residents in frigid homes and stuck cars.

With many grocery stores in the Buffalo area closed and driving bans in place, some people pleaded on social media for donations of food and diapers.

The ferocity of the whiteout conditions tested an area accustomed to punishing snow.

"It doesn't matter if you had 1,000 more pieces of equipment and 10,000 personnel, there's still nothing you could have done in that period. It was that bad," Poloncarz, the county official, said. "I know it's hard for people to believe but it was like looking at a white wall for 14 to 18 hours straight."

Relief is coming this week, though, as forecasts call for temperatures to slowly rise, said Ashton Robinson Cook, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service.

"Nothing like what we had last week," Cook said adding that the bomb cyclone — when atmospheric pressure drops very quickly in a

strong storm — has weakened. It developed near the Great Lakes, stirring up blizzard conditions, including heavy winds and snow. Extreme weather stretched from the Great Lakes near Canada, down to the Rio Grande along the border with Mexico. About 60% of the U.S. population faced some sort of winter weather advisory or warning, and temperatures plummeted drastically below normal from east of the Rocky Mountains to the Appalachians.

Some 2,085 domestic and international flights were canceled on Monday as of about noon EDT, according to the tracking site FlightAware. The site said Southwest Airlines had 1,253 cancellations — nearly a third of its scheduled flights and about five times as many as any other major U.S. carrier. An email sent to Southwest was not immediately returned and the Dallas-based airline hadn't updated its website about the conditions since Saturday.

"Nothing like what we had last week," Cook said adding that the bomb cyclone — when atmospheric pressure drops very quickly in a

Based on FlightAware data, airports all across the U.S. were suffering from cancellations and delays, including Denver, Atlanta, Las Vegas, Seattle, Baltimore and Chicago.

"This blizzard is one for the ages. Certainly, it is the blizzard of the century," New York Gov. Kathy Hochul said Monday after touring the aftermath in her hometown of Buffalo, where almost every fire truck became stranded Saturday. She noted the storm came a little over a month after the region was inundated with another "historic" snowfall. Between the two storms, snowfall totals are not far off from the 95.4 inches the area normally sees in an entire winter season.

The National Weather Service said the snow total at the Buffalo Niagara International Airport stood at 49.2 inches (1.25 meters) at 10 a.m. Monday. Officials said the airport would be shut through Tuesday morning.

Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown

described the heartbreak-ing task of retrieving storm victims from cars, homes and streets.

"Our police officers are hu-man. It is painful to find members of your community that are deceased," the mayor said, adding that the blizzard's victims "were trying to walk out during storm conditions, got dis-orientated and passed away out in the street."

In a nearby home, Shahida Muhammad told WKBW that an outage knocked out power to her 1-year-old son's ventilator. She and the child's father manually administered breaths from Friday until Sunday when rescuers saw her desper-ate social media posts and came to their aid.

Erie County officials said they went to the family's home Saturday but that no one came to the door. Mu-hammad said they were there but thankfully her son was doing well despite the ordeal. She described him as "a fighter."

The storm also knocked out power in communities from Maine to Seattle. The mid-Atlantic grid operator had called for its 65 million consumers to conserve energy amid the freeze Saturday. Storm-related deaths were reported all over the country, from six motorists killed in crashes in Missouri, Kansas and Kentucky to a woman who fell through Wisconsin river ice and a deadly Kan-sas homeless camp fire.

In Jackson, Mississippi, crews struggled Monday to get water through the capital city's beleaguered wa-ter system, authorities said. Many areas had no water or low water pressure. On Christmas Day, residents were told to boil their drink-ing water due to water lines bursting in the frigid tem-peratures.

"The issue has to be sig-nificant leaks in the sys-tem that we have yet to identify," the city said in a statement Monday. City of-ficials say the problems af-fect "many areas" of Jack-son but haven't said how many residents are without water. □

U.N. official, Taliban minister meet on Afghan women NGO ban

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) —

The top U.N. official in Kabul met with a Taliban government minister in Afghanistan's capital on Monday, following a decision by the country's new rulers to bar women from working for non-governmental organizations, the U.N. mission said. The ban has already prompted four major international aid agencies to suspend operations in Afghanistan, raising the possibility that millions of people will be left without food, education, health care and other critical services during the harsh winter months.

Humanitarian officials have warned that excluding women from NGO work will have catastrophic consequences for the population by depriving them of life-saving assistance.

The measure — the latest in restrictions on women's rights and freedoms in Afghanistan — was announced on Saturday by Qari Din Mohammed Hanif, the Taliban economy minister. It was imposed allegedly because some female NGO employees in Afghanistan were not wearing the Islamic headscarf, or hijab,



The acting head of the U.N. Mission in Afghanistan, Ramiz Alakbarov, meets with the Taliban government's economy minister, Qari Din Mohammed Hanif, in the Afghan capital, Kabul, on Monday, Dec. 26, 2022, following a decision by authorities to bar women from working at national and international NGOs in the country.

Associated Press

correctly. Hanif at the time said that any organization found not complying with the order will have its license revoked.

The U.N. mission in Afghanistan said in a tweet that its acting head, Ramiz Alakbarov, met with Hanif on Monday and called for a reversal of the ban.

"Millions of Afghans need humanitarian assistance and removing barriers is vital," the U.N. said, without providing more details

about the meeting. The Economy Ministry spokesman, Abdul Rahman Habib, told The Associated Press the meeting was arranged after Hanif issued the NGO order.

The four aid agencies stopped their operations in Afghanistan, saying they could not effectively reach people in desperate need without their female workforce.

Save the Children, the International Rescue Com-

mittee, the Norwegian Refugee Council and CARE have been providing essential services and support amid plummeting living conditions.

Islamic Relief said its female staff were vital in providing essential healthcare, food and supporting widows and orphans. It is temporarily suspending non-lifesaving activities in Afghanistan because of the ban, although its lifesaving health care will continue. □

China sends 71 warplanes, 7 ships toward Taiwan in 24 hours

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — China's military sent 71 planes and seven ships toward Taiwan in a 24-hour display of force directed at the self-ruled island, Taiwan's Defense Ministry said Monday, after China expressed anger at Taiwan-related provisions in a U.S. annual defense spending bill.

China's military harassment of Taiwan, which it claims is its own territory, has intensified in recent years, and the Communist Party's People's Liberation Army has sent planes or ships toward the island on a near-daily basis.

Between 6 a.m. Sunday and 6 a.m. Monday, 47 of the Chinese planes crossed the median of the Taiwan Strait, an unofficial bound-

ary once tacitly accepted by both sides, according to Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense.

Among the planes China sent towards Taiwan were 18 J-16 fighter jets, 11 J-1 fighters, 6 Su-30 fighters and drones. Taiwan said it monitored the Chinese moves through its land-based missile systems, as well as on its own navy vessels.

"This is a firm response to the current U.S.-Taiwan escalation and provocation," said Shi Yi, the spokesman for the PLA's Eastern Theater Command, in a statement on Sunday night. It announced that the PLA was holding joint combat patrols and joint strike drills in the waters around Taiwan. Shi was referring to the

U.S. defense spending bill, which calls China a strategic challenge. With regard to the Indo-Pacific region, the legislation authorizes increased security cooperation with Taiwan and requires expanded cooperation with India on emerging defense technologies, readiness and logistics.

In Washington, an official of the White House National Security Council said China's military activity near Taiwan was "destabilizing, risks miscalculations, and undermines regional peace and stability."

The official, who was not authorized to be identified and commented on condition of anonymity, said: "The United States has an abiding interest in peace

and stability across the Taiwan Strait. We will continue to assist Taiwan in maintaining a sufficient self-defense capability in line with our long-standing commitments and consistent with our one-China policy."

China's military has often used large military exercises as a demonstration of force in response to U.S. government actions in support of Taiwan.

It conducted large live-fire military exercises in August in response to U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan. Beijing views visits from foreign governments to the island as de facto recognition of the island as independent and a challenge to China's claim of sovereignty. □

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S. Korea launches jets, fires shots after North flies drones

By HYUNG-JIN KIM
Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea's military fired warning shots, scrambled fighter jets and flew surveillance assets across the heavily fortified border with North Korea on Monday, after North Korean drones violated its airspace for the first time in five years in a fresh escalation of tensions. South Korea's military detected five drones from North Korea crossing the border, and one traveled as far as the northern part of the South Korean capital region, which is about an hour's drive away, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said. The military responded by firing warning shots and launching fighter jets and attack helicopters to shoot down the North Korean drones. The attack helicopters fired a combined 100 rounds but it wasn't immediately known if any of the North Korean drones were shot down, according to the Defense Ministry. There were no immediate reports of civilian damage on the ground in South Korea. One of the North Korean drones returned to the North after three hours in South Korea, while the rest disappeared from South Korean military radars one after another, the Joint Chiefs said.

The North Korean drones and the swift response from the South came three days



A suspected North Korean drone is viewed at the Defense Ministry in Seoul, South Korea, on June 21, 2017.

after the North fired two short-range ballistic missiles in the latest in its torrid run of weapons tests this year. Friday's launches were seen as a protest of the South Korean-U.S. joint air drills that North Korea views as an invasion rehearsal. One of the South Korean fighter jets scrambled on Monday, a KA-1 light attack plane, crashed during takeoff but its two pilots both ejected safely, defense officials said. They said they also requested civilian airports in and near Seoul to halt takeoffs temporarily.

South Korea also sent surveillance assets near and

across the border to photograph key military facilities in North Korea as corresponding measures against the North Korean drone flights, the Joint Chiefs said. It didn't elaborate, but some observers say that South Korea likely flew unmanned drones inside North Korean territory.

"Our military will thoroughly and resolutely respond to this kind of North Korean provocation," Maj. Gen. Lee Seung-o, director of operations at the South Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff, told reporters.

South Korea's public confirmation of any reconnaissance activities inside

North Korea is highly unusual and likely reflects a resolve by the conservative government led by President Yoon Suk Yeol to get tough on North Korean provocations. North Korea could respond with more fiery rhetoric or weapons tests or other provocation, some observers say.

It's the first time for North Korean drones to enter South Korean airspace since 2017, when a suspected North Korean drone was found crashed in South Korea. South Korean military officials said at the time that the drone with a Sony-made camera photographed a U.S. mis-

Associated Press

sile defense system in South Korea.

North Korea has touted its drone program, and South Korean officials have previously said the North had about 300 drones. In 2014, several suspected North Korean drones equipped with Japanese-made cameras were found south of the border. Experts said they were low-tech but could be considered a potential security threat.

A White House National Security official said U.S. officials were "consulting closely with the (Republic of Korea) about the nature of this incursion."

"We recognize the need of the ROK to protect its territorial integrity," said the official, who was not authorized to be identified and commented on condition of anonymity. "The U.S. commitment to the defense of the Republic of Korea remains ironclad."

Earlier this month, North Korea claimed to have performed major tests needed to acquire its first spy satellite and a more mobile intercontinental ballistic missile capable of reaching the U.S. mainland. They were among high-tech weapons systems that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has vowed to introduce along with multi-warheads, underwater-launched nuclear missiles, nuclear-powered submarines and hypersonic missiles. □



Israeli Prime Minister designate Benjamin Netanyahu, center, pauses during a session after Yariv Levin was selected as Speaker of the Knesset, Israel's parliament, in Jerusalem, Tuesday, Dec. 13, 2022.

Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Over 1,000 senior Israeli air force

Israeli air force veterans say incoming government a danger

veterans, including a former Israeli chief of staff, on Monday urged the country's top legal officials to stand tough against the incoming government.

In a letter to the chief of Israel's Supreme Court and other top officials, they said the alliance of religious and ultranationalist parties threatens Israel's future. The letter was delivered days before the new government is to take office.

"We come from all strata of society and from across the political spectrum," the let-

ter said. "What we have in common today is the fear that the democratic state of Israel is in danger."

It called the legal officials "the final line of defense" and implored them to "do everything in your reach to stop the disaster that is affecting the country."

Among the nearly 1,200 signatories were Dan Halutz, who served as military chief from 2005-2007; Avihu Ben-Nun, a former commander of the air force and Amos Yadlin, a former head of military intelligence. All

three are former fighter pilots.

Former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his ultra-Orthodox and far-right partners captured a parliamentary majority in Nov. 1 elections.

While they have not yet completed coalition negotiations, Netanyahu has reached a series of deals that would grant his far-right partners authority over the national police force and settlement construction in the occupied West Bank. □



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Removal of palapas at the beach causing commotion

ORANJESTAD – Recently on social media, debate is ongoing regarding the palapas that are slowly being removed from the beach in front of Barceló hotel. The idea seems to be to replace these with coconut trees, something that is causing confusion and reactions both amongst our locals and our visitors.

It is known that beaches in Aruba are all public and are not the property of any hotel. For this reason, palapas on the beach are also considered public property and can be used by whoever arrives first.

There are exceptions, for example, if the property line for the hotel extends to a certain point on the beach, or if the hotel has reached an agreement with the government to privatize the use of the palapas, leaving the hotel to build the palapas itself.

Lack of clarity on this subject has led to confusion and displeasure among locals and tourists who make use of the palapas to protect themselves from the scolding sun in Aruba while they enjoy a beach day. Seeing the reactions on social media, Barceló Group published a statement on their official Facebook account addressing the commotion around this topic.

"It has been brought to our attention that there have been discussions going on regarding the chair saving and palapas situation following a post on social media. Barceló Aruba Management would like to clarify that the number of chairs or loungers that are around the Pool Area currently are more than what

it used to be on previous years. The only thing we have tried to do is improve the appearance and make the pool area and its surrounding gardens more pleasant, as is easy to appreciate after the takeover by Barceló Group. However, to place more chairs or loungers would be going against the safety guidelines established by local authorities.

In case of an emergency there are two meeting points: one of them being the beach. So, to keep the area safe for an eventual evacuation we cannot place more furniture," according to the statement.

"It has always been the aim of the management to keep the beach as natural as possible and to maintain the natural look of the surroundings taking into consideration the environment. Barceló Group has always respected the nature and has vowed to not only keep the grounds clean but also to do limited damage to the beach, because for us sustainability is one of our great purposes.

"The palapas have been a point of discussion for many years and to avoid this to continue it has been decided to eliminate them and to replant coconut trees in their places. Barceló Aruba is the only property of the Barceló Group that has palapas on the beach and this is against our standard. Therefore we will be taking down the palapas gradually as they deteriorate and replant coconut trees to provide the necessary shades.

We have always been clear and consistent with this policy and this sign posted on the beach from the mo-

ment the hotel became Barceló demonstrates it."

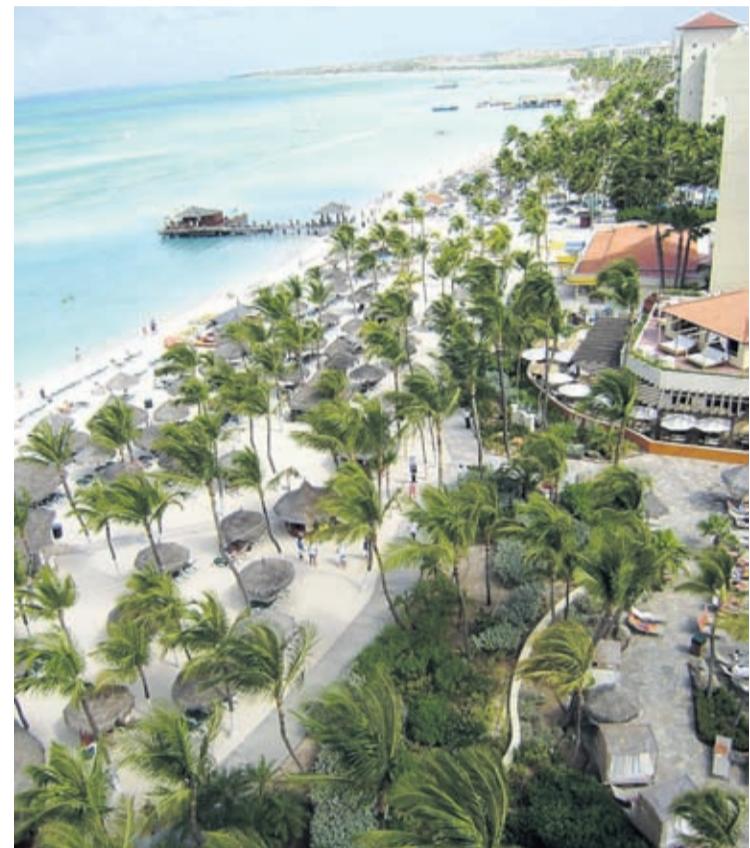
On social media, tourists have been expressing their frustration on this subject. One person in particular pointed out that they are canceling their reservation for Aruba, because a coconut tree does not offer enough shade and protection from the heat of the sun.

Another one mentioned that as a time share owner and member of the Royal Club Barceló, they pay a sum for maintenance that includes use of a palapa. Tourists who pay for the all-inclusive are also paying for the use of a palapa; but seeing now as they will not be able to use a palapa, they are asking what the hotel is doing to compensate for this cost.

For the palapas that are still remaining on the beach, there is a system of reservation, and the palapas get reserved very quickly. Another tourist commented: "There is a reason why people wake up at 4am to reserve a palapa. They want and need shade. The coconut trees do not give enough shade."

However, there are others who support the hotel's decision to remove the deteriorated palapas instead of fixing them, and replacing them with coconut trees, and they point out that coconut trees do provide enough shade and protection from the sun.

However, lack of clarity on the legality of the situation leaves unanswered questions: if the beach is public, does a hotel have the power to remove palapas and plant coconut trees? □



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FULL SOLAR OCEAN VIEW COMMUNITY POOL ELEVATOR COVERED PARKING HOA HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION LOW MAINTENANCE

Over a decade in business, Aruba Living Today: Offering the so much needed human touch

NOORD — We are in 2022. It's been a wild ride with Covid-19 and we all are aiming for a change of routine. We simply want to "live" life again. "It is time for living your dream," as the quote says at Aruba Living Today's office. "We are ten plus years in business, and I am proud to say that all our clients stuck with us. We are no part of a big company, we keep it small, personal, and real. Because you are not a number, no sales target either and certainly your name is not commission. Our responsibility is to make your dream come true," says owner Randolph Ar-ends.

From human to human

If you have decided to buy a house or rent one for vacation



in Aruba and you are looking for that match, the question now is how to click with a person that offers a personal touch? One who pays genuine attention and

has sincere interest in what you want? This different approach to real estate is what sets Aruba Living Today apart, and the reason Randolph calls himself a property mediator instead of a real estate broker. "The personal touch is essential to me. I am stepping aside of the image that real estate brokers are only in for the commission. This image does not fit me at all, I am in for my passion, and I can only do this from the heart."

One stop shopping point

Services offered by Aruba Living Today are House and Land Sales, Rentals, Investments, Property Management, Vacation Rental, Mortgages, Insurances, Maintenance, Assist in Arrangements for Notary and Utilities, Guiding Bureaucracy Process and Assisting in Import of Furniture. Randolph and his business partner Berend Prenger are a fantastic, experienced duo, each of them specialists in the field. Berend is also a certified appraiser within the Dutch Kingdom meaning he does your appraisal report that is accepted by all banks and he delivers within three days. "This definitely speeds up the process of buying," Prenger adds.

You are welcome to meet in person

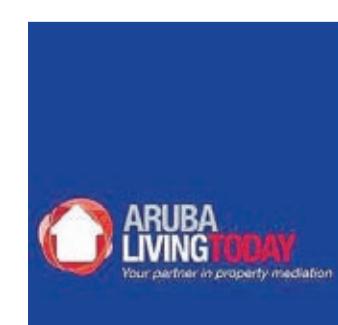
Aruba Living Today houses in an authentic Aruban house, wel-

coming you in a warm ambience that emphasizes the philosophy of connecting. Candles, Buddha ornaments and a homely setting form the décor for you to sit and talk about your dream house or investment. "My goal was to do real estate in a different way when I established this company June 1st 2009. Not from the perspective of only selling, but to look for the perfect match between dream house and client. My philosophy is: it will only work when all involved are happy and connected by that personal touch."

Aruba Living Today caters for both local and foreign market divided into 40 % local buyers and 60 % foreign buyers. "Our customers come from Holland, Belgium, Norway, Germany, UK, Russia, Latin America, United States and Canada. We are widely covered and thus provable good with different cultures, also we speak four languages." Besides that, Aruba Living Today is open to every budget, they have listings for all category buyers. As a member of the Aruban Real Estate Association, they are listed also on the website www.arubalisting.com within a group of 20 of the most advanced realtors on the island. Aruba Living Today is featured on House Hunters, social media, Aruba Living Today and of course in Aruba Today's newspaper. □

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Full Stack Vision Foundation Gifts Refurbished Computers to YMCA Aruba in San Nicolas



San Nicolas - The Full Stack Vision Foundation team met with Ms. Inki Geerman, Team Leader of the Y's CARE Afterschool Program, at YMCA Aruba's San Nicolas location on November 24th, 2022, to officialize their gift of six (6) refurbished computers to the community center thus establishing a new computer room for YMCA San Nicolas.

The six (6) computers that were refurbished by Full Stack Vision Foundation (also known as Full Stack Vision and FSV) were donated by SKOA's Pius X School which is based in Dakota, Aruba.

YMCA Aruba previously used the San Nicolas-based community center's space as a homework support room. Although this space was originally a computer room, but as the original computers broke down and were disposed of, the space transitioned. The newly reactivated computer room at the YMCA San Nicolas community center is available for use during YMCA Aruba's Afterschool Program hours which are Monday to Friday from 12.30PM to 6PM.

YMCA Aruba's San Nicolas location & Full Stack Vision are currently in the works to further develop their

collaborative relationship in the form of introducing Aru Coder Dojo sessions, a FREE kids & youth computer coding club that is powered by FSV, in the newly up-and-running computer room as of 2023.

The YMCA Aruba is a non-profit organization that is a part of the international organization, The YMCA, which is committed to improving the lives of people in communities on a global scale. YMCA Aruba's mission is to strive for spiritual, intellectual and physical wellbeing of both individuals and communities as a whole and Full Stack Vision Foundation is a nonprofit



organization with a focus on developing skills for future jobs in the borderless economy by making Aruba digitally intelligent. Full Stack Vision executes their vision and mission through the education of Aruba's youth and children, as well as industry professionals, with a focus on 21st century skills. □

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Today Is Going To Be A Good Day

Here's why: Aruba Today collected some things to do BEYOND the beach. Yes, we know. Aruba, located 15 miles north of Venezuela in the warm waters of the southern Caribbean, is home to beautiful white-sand beaches, 82-degree days, and thus ideal for the perfect beach day. But we are also blessed with some of the warmest people in the world and our island is 19.6 miles long and 6 miles across, with a total area of 70 square miles. Bit more to discover than the white stretch on the coastline we say. Let's mention some of these hidden gems.

Nature Calls



The Arikok National park is worth the ride. We love the hikes that are guided by the park's rangers whose job is to maintain trails and protect natural resources. The flora and fauna are beautiful and the historical sites tell you about the island's indigenous roots. The guided tours are even free of charge. If you are not up to walking, you can drive through the park, one way or another this park is a great place to spend an entire day. Cruising through the landscape you end up at some of the most stunning beaches like Dos Playa or Daimara Beach. In Total the park consists of 7907 acres protected nature with a richness of animals living in it. The Aruban whip-tail lizard (cododo), Aruban cat eye snake (santanero) and endangered rattle snake (cascabel) are just some of them, you can also admire these close in the park's Visitors' Center. For more information, visit the website www.arubanationalpark.org

Philip's Animal Garden

To stay with the animals, let's hop to an amazing place. Something different to do, an experience that is to be enjoyed by people of all ages. Welcome to Philip's Animal Garden. We are not talking about a zoo here, this is actually a sanctuary for all types of creatures, from horses to peacocks, kangaroos to turtles, monkeys, goats, and many, many more different species. The place was founded in 2009 and it is the only organization rescuing and rehabilitating exotic animals in Aruba, which has resulted in an amazing collection of these animals. They provide a suitable living environment for all the rescued animals. Up until now the owner, Philip, has built this shelter with his own efforts; building all the cages from scratch, designing all structures and welding them with his own bare hands. His goal is to upgrade the facilities to a world-class animal shelter with veterinary care and round-the-clock staffs. With the input from the Aruban community and visitors they provide the best care for these animals. Please check out their website for more information: www.philipsanimalgarden.com


philipsanimalgarden.com.

The Lighthouse

No, you would not think of this as a hidden gem. The California Lighthouse is actually one of the most known highlights in Aruba and many repeated guests most probably took the ride uphill already. But, there is a significant change to this tower. Since September 2016 you can climb the top. In 2015 Stichting Monumentenfonds started the restoration of the California Lighthouse. The project finished in September 2016 and the Lighthouse is now open for visitors to enjoy the beautiful view from the top. The construction of the California Lighthouse started in 1915. The name 'California' came from a vessel of the West India Company and Pacific Steamship Co. called 'California' that shipwrecked in the area in 1891. Therefore they came up with the idea of building a lighthouse that could indicate the island's eastern tip to ships with its light. www.arubalighthouse.com will give you more information.

Kayak in the Mangroves

Mangel Halto at Savaneta is definitely a place not to miss out on. The beautiful beach with the natural mangroves is simply a beauty, but if you are into a more active way to enjoy the nature: take a kayak. While you are doing some workout -as it might get a little windy and rough-, you will see the island from a different perspective. You can even make a stop to do some snorkeling at the reef. Its fun, it's healthy and for sure something else. There are several companies that offer kayak tours, we had good experience with The Shack Kayak Tours Aruba, find them on Facebook. □

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Chef Urvin Croes



Three organizers join forces for a three-day Dande Festival

ORANJESTAD – Dande Festival, a cultural year-end tradition in Aruba, will take place next week. Commission for the Celebration of National Days of the Department of Culture said they are glad to be able to promote the festival this year.

The Dande is a local oral tradition where the song "ay nobe" (aña nobo) – "new year" is performed as the New Year is approaching or has arrived. Dande stems from the word Dandala, which loosely translates into "to party, he who parties, or simply paranda". The first sentence of the Dande song "oh dande nos a jega na bo porta" – Ay Nobe, translated means "Oh the party has arrived at your door" – New Year. The origin of the Dande is not known, however there are many theories such as; 1. It started in the district of Savaneta, 2. It started in the district of Noord, 3. Its popularity strengthened in the district of St. Cruz, or 4. It started after the abolition of slavery in 1863 by the

Dutch King. A group of five or sometimes even six people (one singer accompanied by numerous musicians) usually performs the most known Aruban end of the year tradition. These people, usually family members accompany a singer and travel door-to-door to express their best wishes for the New Year in repetitive phrases (blessings), with a chorus that includes the phrase "ay nobe" (aña nobo) – "new year" – sung after each blessing. Currently, the celebratory travel usually leads to the houses of the singers' friends and family, where the singer collects money in his hat to give to the group. To read more, please visit <https://www.arubatoday.com/culture-for-christmas>.

This year, the festival will take place on December 27-29. The Commission informed that for the first time, UNOCA will be part of this celebration together with the Commission in order to elevate the festival of Dande.



Lyonel Dirks said that after they sat together with all three organizers, being Chico Harms Foundation, Children and Youth Festival Commission, and Big Adult Festival – which are celebrating 50 years of their festival – they reached the conclusion to put all these festivals together, but on different dates; this to give the Aruban community time to celebrate each festi-

tival with its different concept while remaining within the Dande tradition. On the 27th the festival will be at the Centro di Bario Brazil organized by the Chico Harms Foundation. Chico Harms, who was present at the press conference, mentioned he is very happy that this year UNOCA and the Commission for the Celebration of National Days came together to make these activities as big as possible.

Regarding their show, Harms said that because of the Covid-19 pandemic, this is the 53rd edition of the festival. They began at Colegio Cristo Rey and after the opening of sede di bario Brazil, they moved there. This year there will be 17 groups taking part. "We have to also do it for children in Tanki Leendert and we have to see how we're going to do it next year. We cannot let this slip at any moment, this is ours and we must carry on", Harms said. The festival at Centro di Bario Brazil will begin at 6:30 seeing as 17 is a large amount of groups. They expect to finish around 12-1am.

Aaron Arenas of the Commission to Promote Culture said that on the 28th of December the festival will take place at the Centro di Bario Tanki Leendert for children and youth. There will be a total of 20 participants in

the categories of 4-6 years, 7-9 years, 10-12 years and 13 to 17 years old. Each category will crown a king or queen. This will be the fourth winner, and each category will have either two or three places.

The youth festival will begin at 7pm with 7 groups, and they expect it will finish around 11pm-12am.

Finally on the 29th of December the festival for adults will take place, celebrating 50 years in Club Caquetio. This will begin at 6:30am.

Director of UNOCA, Rayanne Hernandez said that this year they decided to partner with the Commission for the Celebration of National Days, Department of Culture and Ministry of Culture so that together they can elevate the Dande festivals in Aruba.

The idea behind this is for each of the three festivals can receive more support than they usually do. "We realized that each year it becomes a challenge for each organization to keep on their own standard at the level expected by the Aruban community regarding show and presentation, but also regarding organization and logistics. This was a very important reason for us to support these festivals, to maintain the level and to continue maintaining our Dande tradition," Hernandez said. □



CROSSWORD

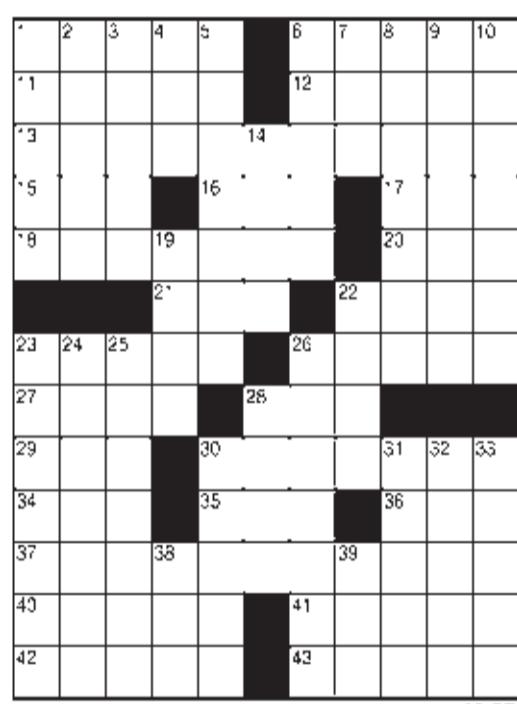
By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Game infractions 40 Psycho-analysis
- 6 Bank sub-traction 41 Play part
- 11 Indian coin 42 Forest flora
- 12 Sports spot 43 Car quartet
- 13 Advantageous position 15 Star pitcher
- 16 Orang-utan, e.g.
- 17 Compete
- 18 Stops working
- 20 UFO fliers
- 21 Game cube
- 22 Stew
- 23 Fancy parties
- 26 Rodeo rope
- 27 Opera piece
- 28 Took the title
- 29 Upper limit
- 30 Security system parts
- 34 Snaky shape
- 35 Small barrel
- 36 Greek X
- 37 Low probability of success

**Yesterday's answer****DOWN**

- 1 Monk 9 Spurs on 26 Most extensive
- 2 Pound part 10 Likes instinctively 28 Hoe target
- 3 Surprise win 14 Fencing sword 30 Loses traction
- 4 Maui souvenir 19 Notion 31 Earthy color
- 5 Humorist David 22 Stadium crowd 32 River of France
- 6 Sees socially 23 Hockey game 33 Places
- 7 Drop the ball 24 Sign of start 38 Solar system center
- 8 Dam builders 25 Tout error 39 Biol. or chem.



12-27

AXYDIBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three Ls, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

12-27

CRYPTOQUOTE

HY BS SASUC GYQU YI HGS
VZFGH ERK KEUJ ZP E
BZUEMVS, SASUC MQDZM
ZRMG YI PLEMS ZP E BZUEMVS.

— NEVH NGZHBER

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: EVERYBODY CAN BE GREAT BECAUSE ANYBODY CAN SERVE. YOU ONLY NEED A HEART FULL OF GRACE.—MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

Parties are back, but how to dress? A holiday guide

By LEANNE ITALIE

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The season's triple-virus threat notwithstanding, parties are back, and they've brought with them the potential for some dress code chaos.

White tie, black tie, black tie creative/festive, semi-formal: It might take some extra re-entry energy to figure out these pre-pandemic guidelines in an exhausted world more used to sweats and sneakers.

Invitations sometimes don't specify attire, leaving it until the RSVP phase or expecting guests to infer based on experience or an event's description. That was perhaps easier pre-pandemic, but many people are ready to take on the challenge, shed their cozy, casual duds and dress up once again.

"The stories I'm hearing from people is that they're happy for an opportunity to get out of the sweatpants," said Lizzie Post, Emily Post's great-great-granddaughter and co-author of a rejuvenated new edition of "Emily Post's Etiquette" to mark the book's centennial.

With help from the Posts, a rundown from the most formal to the least formal attire:

WHITE TIE

This, the most formal traditional attire, involves a white bow tie, black jacket with tails, matching trousers and white vests for evening. Swap in a morning coat for day.

Think royal events, ultra-galas or super formal weddings.

"I think the thing that people are most unsure about is formal attire because most of us have few occasions to ever wear it," Post said. "That's one most people get stressed about, but it's a category that's pretty well-defined."

By well-defined, she means: trousers with a satin or braid stripe; plain-front, wing-collar,



Blake Lively, left, and Ryan Reynolds attend The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute benefit gala on Monday, May 2, 2022, in New York.

Associated Press

French cuff shirts; stiff white pique vests; cuff links or studs; black or white braces; black socks; and black patent-leather pumps or lace-up Oxfords. Studs for buttons or covered buttons are options.

Chesterfield coats, which are formal, dark-colored and knee-length with velvet collars, are suitable as outerwear for cold weather, as opposed to one's down parka.

Gowns are floor length, or possibly VERY formal two-piece outfits, with optional gloves of varying lengths. A dress-pant combo is rare.

BLACK TIE/CREATIVE/FESTIVE

Attire is the same as black tie but with colors or embellishment added for a bit more dazzle.

For dresses and two-piece outfits, there's some wiggle room to experiment with color, texture and accessories, Post said.

"It's sometimes worn to celebrate a particular holiday or something like that. If I was invited to a festive, black-tie Christmas event, I'm searching for a bow tie and cummerbund that have Santa Claus or reindeer or something on them," Post added.

Be sensitive to other people's cultures and holidays, she added.

SEMI-FORMAL

Expect suits, jackets and ties with slacks, dress tops, dress pants, and maxi-length hems that are long but not full-on formal gowns. Tea-length, knee-length or two-piece outfits fit here. □

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Holiday sales up 7.6% despite the squeeze of inflation

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Holiday sales rose this year as American spending remained resilient during the critical shopping season despite surging prices on everything from food to rent, according to one measure.

Holiday sales rose 7.6, a slower pace than the 8.5% increase from a year earlier when shoppers began spending the money they had saved during the early part of the pandemic, according to Mastercard SpendingPulse, which tracks all kinds of payments including cash and debit cards.

Mastercard SpendingPulse had expected a 7.1% increase. The data released Monday excludes the automotive industry and is not adjusted for inflation, which has eased somewhat but remains painfully high.

U.S. sales between Nov. 1 and Dec. 24, a period that is critical for retailers, were fueled by spending at restaurants and on clothing. By category, clothing rose 4.4%, while jewelry and electronics dipped roughly 5%. Online sales jumped 10.6% from a year ago and in-person spending rose 6.8%. Department stores registered a modest 1% increase over 2021.

"This holiday retail season looked different than years past," Steve Sadove, the former CEO and chairman at Saks and a senior advisor for Mastercard, said in a prepared statement. "Retailers discounted heavily, but consumers diversified their holiday spending to accommodate rising prices and an appetite for experiences and festive gatherings post-pandemic."

Casa Del Mar 2BR/2B:

Week2/Unit 1113 (18k);
Week 5/Unit 1315 (20k);
Week 8/Unit 1113 (19k);
Week 8/Unit 1409 (19k);
Week 10/Unit 1207 (17k);
Week 13/Unit 1509 (14k);
Week 14/Unit 1308 (14k); and,
Week 15/Unit 1317 (10k).
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216163



A shopper carries bags down Fifth Avenue on Black Friday, Nov. 25, 2022, in New York.

Associated Press

ic."

Some of the increase reflected the impact of higher prices across the board. Consumer spending accounts for nearly 70% of U.S. economic activity, and Americans have remained resilient ever since inflation first spiked almost 18 months ago. Cracks have begun to show, however, as higher prices for basic necessities take up an increasingly large share of everyone's take-home pay. Inflation has retreated from the four-decade high it reached this summer, but it's still sapping the spending power of consumers. Prices rose 7.1% in November from a year ago, down from a peak of 9.1% in June. Overall spending has slowed from the pandemic-infused splurges and

shifted increasingly toward necessities like food, while spending on electronics, furniture, new clothes and other non-necessities has faded. Many shoppers been trading down to private label goods, which are typically less expensive than national brands. They've been going to cheaper stores like dollar chains and big box stores like Walmart.

Consumers also waited for deals. Stores expected more procrastinators to hit stores in the last few days before Christmas compared with a year ago when people began shopping earlier due to a global disruption of the supply chain that created thousands of product shortages.

"Consumers are trying to

spread out their budget, and they are evaluating and shopping at different stores," said Katie Thompson, the lead of consultancy Kearney's Consumer Institute.

In November, shoppers cut back sharply on retail spending compared with the previous month. Retail sales fell 0.6% from October to November after a sharp 1.3% rise the previous month, the government said in mid-December. Sales fell at furniture, electronics, and home and garden stores.

A broader picture of how Americans spent their money arrives next month when the National Retail Federation, the nation's largest retail trade group, comes out with its combined two-month results based on November-December sales figures from the Commerce Department.

The trade group expects holiday sales growth will slow to a range of 6% to 8%, compared with the blistering 13.5% growth of a year ago.

Analysts will also be dissecting fourth-quarter financial results from major retailers in February. □

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Broncos fire rookie head coach Hackett after 4-11 start

By ARNIE STAPLETON
AP Pro Football Writer

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. (AP) — The Denver Broncos fired first-year head coach Nathaniel Hackett on Monday with two games left in the season.

Owner and CEO Greg Penner said he'll lead the search for a new coach with assistance from GM George Paton, in whom he expressed confidence while announcing Hackett's dismissal.

Firing Hackett with two games left in a lost season allows Penner to begin his search for a replacement immediately.

The Broncos scheduled a news conference for Tuesday, when they're expected to name their interim head coach for games at Kansas City next weekend and at home against the Chargers in Week 18. The Walton-Penner group purchased the Broncos for \$4.65 billion last summer, a global record for a professional sports franchise, and Rob Walton said after the league's approval that he aimed to make the Broncos perennial championship contenders again.

On Sunday, the Broncos (4-11) were blown out by the equally downtrodden Los Angeles Rams 51-14 when



Denver Broncos head coach Nathaniel Hackett reacts after an interception against the Arizona Cardinals during the first half of an NFL football game, Sunday, Dec. 18, 2022, in Denver.

Associated Press

Russell Wilson threw three interceptions and was sacked six times. The game featured a sideline spat between backup QB Brett Rypien and guard Dalton Risner, and pass rusher Randy Gregory threw a punch at a Rams player after the game.

In a statement Monday, Penner thanked Hackett for his dedication but said that "following extensive conversations with George and our ownership group, we determined a new di-

rection would ultimately be in the best interest of the Broncos. This change was made now out of respect for everyone involved and allows us to immediately begin the search for a new head coach."

Penner said that "moving forward, we will carefully evaluate every aspect of our football operations and make whatever changes are necessary to restore this franchise's winning tradition."

Hackett replaced Vic Fan-

gio last January but hasn't been able to build an offense suitable to Wilson, who recently turned 34.

Hackett is the third NFL head coach fired during the 2022 season. The Carolina Panthers replaced Matt Rhule with interim head coach Steve Wilks and the Indianapolis Colts fired Frank Reich and replaced him with coaching novice Jeff Saturday.

Many fans thought the Broncos hired Hackett away from the Green Bay

Packers, where he was offensive coordinator, to help them land quarterback Aaron Rodgers. But Rodgers decided to re-up with the Packers and the Broncos instead traded for Wilson, who was seen as still in his prime.

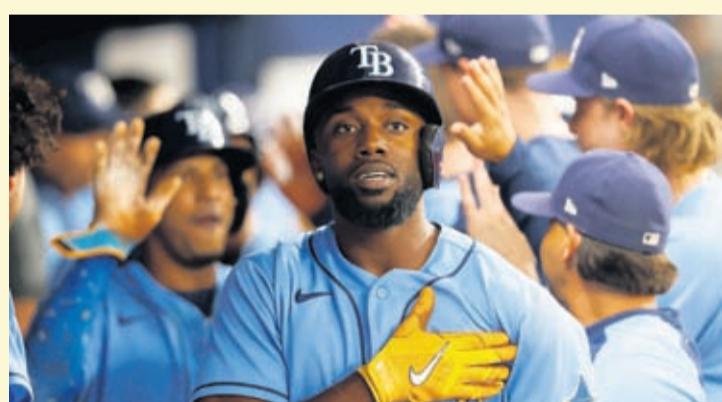
Wilson, however, has had an awful first season in Denver after the Broncos sent four premium draft picks and three players to Seattle for the nine-time Pro Bowler. Wilson has 12 touchdown passes with nine interceptions and 49 sacks in 13 starts and has been unable to snap out of a season-long funk.

He is 3-10 as Denver's starter and has missed games with a pulled hamstring and a concussion.

He routinely has ignored open receivers underneath to try for deep throws and he has shown a noticeable dip in his ability to escape from pass rushers this season.

The Broncos have missed the playoffs seven straight seasons and extended their string of losing records to six.

They will try to snap a 14-game losing streak to the Kansas City Chiefs on Sunday and beat Patrick Mahomes for the first time in 11 tries. □



Tampa Bay Rays' Randy Arozarena reacts in the dugout after hitting a three-run home against the Toronto Blue Jays during the fifth inning of a baseball game Sept. 23, 2022, in St. Petersburg, Fla.

Associated Press

**By MEGAN JANETSKY
Associated Press**
HAVANA (AP) — The United States will permit Major League Baseball players from Cuba to represent their home country in the World Baseball Classic next year. The decision announced

Saturday in a news release by the Baseball Federation of Cuba (FCB) could be a big step in once again turning Cuba's national team into heavy hitters on an international stage. Major League Baseball confirmed Monday that the U.S. granted the li-

U.S. to let MLB stars play for Cuba in World Baseball Classic

cense to FCB. It clears the way for MLB stars such as José Abreu, Yordan Alvarez, Randy Arozarena, Yoán Moncada and Luis Robert to play for Cuba in the WBC in March if they choose to accept a potential invitation.

It's up to each country's national governing body to pick the players on its WBC team. Final 30-man rosters are due Feb. 7 for the WBC, which begins March 8 with Cuba facing the Netherlands in Taiwan. While the sport of choice for much of Latin America is soccer, baseball dominates in Cuba. The island has gained fame around

the world for its baseball talent. But in recent years, hundreds of those players have defected from Cuba to play professionally elsewhere. Most notably, many have become United States residents and stars with major league teams in the U.S.

The defections are largely due to a not-so-uncommon geopolitical spat between the two seaside neighbors, leaving Cuban players stuck in the middle. Cuban athletes competing on the island can't earn a paycheck under the communist government, which prohibited professional sports follow-

ing the Cuban revolution 60 years ago.

Longtime sanctions by the U.S. make it largely impossible for Cubans to play professionally for an American team without defecting. Meanwhile, Cuba historically has not allowed Cuban players who defected on their national team rosters.

The defections have taken a toll on Cuba's performance in international baseball competitions. For example, the Cuban baseball team failed to qualify for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics after years of previously winning medals in the sport. □

Rams, Bucs, Packers earn wins on same day in upside-down NFC

By ROB MAADDI
AP Pro Football Writer

Tom Brady and Aaron Rodgers led comeback wins and the Los Angeles Rams dominated Russell Wilson and the Broncos.

It was a triumphant Christmas for the Buccaneers, Packers and Rams as many figured it would be when the schedule was released in May. The NFC's top three preseason Super Bowl favorites were expected to be jockeying for playoff positioning Sunday.

Instead, the Rams (5-10) are trying to avoid the most losses by a defending Super Bowl champion. The Packers (7-8) need help just to make the playoffs. The Buccaneers (7-8) lead the dreadful NFC South with a first-place showdown coming up against Carolina.

While the NFC is upside down, the AFC has lived up to expectations. The Buffalo Bills (12-3) and Kansas City Chiefs (12-3) entered the season as the top two Super Bowl favorites and they are 1-2 in the race for the No. 1 seed. The defending AFC champion Cincinnati Bengals (11-4) are third with a chance to move up when they host the Bills next Monday night. Brady rallied Tampa Bay from a 10-point deficit in the fourth quarter to a 19-16 overtime victory at Arizona following another poor offensive performance. The 45-year-old, seven-time Super Bowl champion threw two picks for the third straight game, the offense had no rhythm until it went into hurry-up mode late and the depleted offensive line lost another key player.

The Buccaneers would clinch the division title with a win over the Panthers (6-9) on New Year's Day. They'd earn the No. 4 seed in the NFC and home-field advantage in a wild-card game with the most likely opponent being the Dallas Cowboys (11-4).

The Bucs opened the season with a 19-3 win in Dallas. These are two different teams now. If Brady and the Bucs play the way they have for most of the sea-

son, the Cowboys will beat them by double digits.

Brady doesn't seem to trust his offensive line, so he's getting rid of the ball at a faster pace than he ever has, and he appears to lack confidence in his receivers at times.

The offense has been out of sync all season and is averaging fewer than 18 points. But the defense has stepped up and Brady has engineered three comeback wins in the last seven games. They'll need to play far better than they've shown to have a shot at winning a playoff game.

Rodgers and the Packers were headed toward elimination a few weeks ago after a 4-8 start. But they've won three straight games and now can make the

playoffs with two more wins plus a loss by Washington (7-7-1) or two losses by the Giants (8-6-1).

Green Bay trailed Miami 20-10 in the second quarter on Sunday before outscoring the Dolphins 16-0 the rest of the way. The defense picked Tua Tagovailoa three times in the fourth quarter to help secure the 26-20 upset on the road.

The Packers haven't resembled the team that won 13 games in each of the three previous seasons. But they're starting to come together down the stretch.

In 2010 when Rodgers won his only Super Bowl, the Packers made the playoffs as the sixth and final seed in the NFC. They host the Vikings (12-3) and Lions (7-8) in the final two games with



Philadelphia Eagles' Gardner Minshew after throwing an incomplete pass in the final seconds of an NFL football game against the Dallas Cowboys Saturday, Dec. 24, 2022, in Arlington, Texas.

Associated Press

a chance to sneak in. The Rams already have been knocked out of the playoff race, but Baker Mayfield has made them interesting. He was excellent in a 51-14 win against Denver, completing 24 of

28 passes for 238 yards and two touchdowns. Mayfield has led Los Angeles to two victories in three games since he joined the team two days before leading a comeback win over Las Vegas on Dec. 8. □

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Eagle Beach – When you think of a restaurant that pleases the needs of a whole family or a large group of people with all different tastes? Think Water's Edge Restaurant. Located at the shore of Aruba's most wonderful beach, The Eagle Beach Aruba. Water's Edge Restaurant is guaranteed to serve you a fantastic magical night to remember. Whether you prefer to enjoy the view from indoors air conditioned comfort, outdoors in the soft tropical breeze or under a palapa with your toes in the sand. This spectacular restaurant offers the best ocean view sunset or sky full of stars dinner while the crispy Caribbean night wind caresses your face and plays with your hair.

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Culinary Voyage

Start your gastronomic journey with a scrumptious appetizer such as the Maryland Crab Cakes, maybe the Crispy Calamari or the mouthwatering creamy Garlic Tarragon Shrimp.



You can also opt for a classic French Onion Soup, a Lobster Bisque or the famously Water's Edge House Wedge, a crisp wedge of fresh romaine lettuce topped with homemade blue cheese dressing, diced tomatoes, chopped bacon, caramelized pecans and blue cheese crumbles, drizzled with balsamic reduction. This followed by the Chef's special of seafood such as Fresh salmon filet seasoned and grilled, topped with lemon cilantro butter and served with homemade mashed potatoes and fresh asparagus, a nice plate of Ahi Tuna or a succulent pasta dish like the Florentina Fettuccine Alfredo. Meat Lovers will have their fix with choices of a devourable 22oz. Bone-In "Tomahawk" Rib-Eye, pan seared in garlic infused oil and finished in the oven or our juicy N.Y Strip Loin, seasoned & grilled. All our steaks options are seasoned with a blend of kosher salt and freshly cracked black pepper. Served with homemade mashed potatoes, seasoned vegetables and a choice of red wine reduction, green peppercorn demi glace, mushroom sauce, or bacon blue cheese butter. For extra sides the options are delectable. Fresh asparagus, seasonal vegetables, mashed or baked potatoes, fries or rice and beans. Combine your personal choice with one of the most exclusive wine from the

great selection of international wines to compliment your dish. Kids will enjoy every item of the specially compiled kids menu and there are also optional dishes for all vegans, vegetarians and gluten-free guests. To end the culinary voyage with some luscious sweetness, the desserts are wild. From a piece of coconut flan, NY cheese cake, carrot cake, chocolate brownie or our classic Tiramisu with kahlua and amaretto served with chocolate sauce and coffee jelly. Not to mention the fresh and light piece of key lime pie.

Creating memories

If you are planning a birthday dinner, here you will receive a nice bottle of champagne to take home with you to extend your experience even further whether on the beach or your own private balcony.

Live entertainment

Just about every day of the week, there is a different live entertainment by the best local artists for you to enjoy. Whether you're in a romantic mood, or more in a swinging mood, there is absolutely a night especially for you where you can combine great music with delicious cocktails mixed with concoctions. In addition, Water's Edge offers three daily Happy Hours from 12pm-1pm, 4pm-6pm and again from 9pm-10pm with all premium brands specially priced.

Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Whether you join us for breakfast, lunch or dinner, Water's Edge Restaurant & Bar offers a relaxed and inspirational dining experience overlooking the beautiful Eagle Beach with spectacular ocean views. Gather with friends and family for drinks and appetizers or a night of pampering and relaxation.



Thank you to all our guests

From the bottom of our hearts, we would like to Thank all of our guests who showed us so much love and support all throughout the year, and hopefully will continue to do so in the years to come. What we are most grateful for is that we could get back to doing what we love, which is looking after our guests. So, thank you for every dinner, lunch, breakfast, every to-go order, every glass of wine, every birthday, anniversary and date-night that you spent with us this last year. To our new guests, Welcome! We hope you to see you back soon! □

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For more information about the menus, entertainment and hours, please visit the website watersedge-aruba.com